T—Top-Heaviness Determinations
V—Vesting Rules for Top-Heavy Plans
M—Minimum Benefits Under Top-Heavy Plans

G. GENERAL PROVISIONS

G–1 Q. What requirement plans are subject to the top-heavy rules added to the Code by the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act and amended by the Tax Reform Act of 1984?

A. All stock bonus, pension, or profit-sharing plans intended to qualify under section 401(a), annuity contracts described in section 403(a), and simplified employee pensions described in section 408(k) are subject to the new top-heavy rules added to the Code by the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act and amended by the Tax Reform Act (''TRA'') of 1984.

G–2 Q. Is a multiple employer plan subject to the top-heavy requirements of section 416?

A. A multiple employer plan is subject to the requirements of section 416, but only with respect to each individual employer. Thus, if twelve employers contribute to a multiple employer plan and the accrued benefits for the key employees of one employer exceed 60 percent of the accrued benefits of all employees for such employer, the plan is top-heavy with respect to that employer. A failure by the multiple employer plan to satisfy section 416 with respect to the employees of such employer means that all employers are maintaining a plan that is not a qualified plan.

G–3 Q. As of what date must plan amendments to comply with top-heavy rules be effective?

A. Amendments required to comply with the top-heavy rules must be effective as of the first day of the first plan year which begins after 1983. See §1.401(b)–1 for the date by which such amendments must be adopted.

T. TOP-HEAVINESS DETERMINATIONS

T–1 Q. What factors must be considered in determining whether a plan is top-heavy?

A. (a) In order to determine whether a plan is top-heavy for a plan year, it is necessary to determine which employers will be treated as a single employer for purposes of section 416; what the determination date is for the plan year; which employees are or formerly were key employees; which former employees have not performed any service for the employer maintaining the plan at any time during the five-year period ending on the determination date; which plans of such employers are required or permitted to be aggregated to determine top-heavy status; and the present value of the accrued benefits (including distributions made during the plan year containing the determination date and the four preceding plan years) of key employees, former key employees, and non-key employees.

(b) All employers that are aggregated under section 414 (b), (c), and (m) must be taken into account as a single employer for the plan year in question, and those employees in all plans maintained by the employers that are aggregated must be categorized as key employees, as former key employees, or as non-key employees. See Question and Answer T–12 for the determination of which employees are or were key employees. All plans maintained by the employers in which a key employee participates, and certain other plans, must then be aggregated (the required aggregation group). See Question and Answer T–6 for rules concerning required aggregation. Other plans may in some cases be aggregated with the required aggregation group. See Question and Answer T–7 for rules concerning such permissive aggregation.

(c) Once aggregated, all plans that are required to be aggregated will either be top-heavy or not top-heavy, depending upon whether the aggregation group is top-heavy. A plan or aggregation group will be considered top-heavy if the sum of the present value of the accrued benefits for key employees is more than 60 percent of the sum of the present value of accrued benefits of all employees.

(d) Except as otherwise stated, for purposes of section 416(g), an employee is an individual currently or formerly employed by an employer. Former key employees are non-key employees and are excluded entirely from the calculation to determine top-heaviness. In all

cases, the present value of accrued benefits includes distributions made during the plan year containing the determination date and the preceding four plan years. See Questions and Answers T–24 and T–25 for rules concerning the account balances and present value of accrued benefits. For plan years beginning after December 31, 1984, the accrued benefit of an employee who has not performed any sevice for the employer maintaining the plan at any time during the five-year period ending on the determination date is excluded from the calculation to determine top-heaviness. However, if an employee performs no services for five years and then performs sevices, such employee's total accrued benefit is included in the calculation for top-heaviness.

T–2 Q. To what extent are multiemployer plans and multiple employer plans to which an employer makes contributions on behalf of its employees treated as plans of that employer for top-heavy purposes?

A. Multiemployer plans described in section 414(f) and multiple employer plans described in section 413(c) to which an employer makes contributions on behalf of its employees are treated as plans of that employer to the extent that benefits under the plan are provided to employees of the employer because of service with that employer.

T–3 Q. Must a collectively-bargained plan be aggregated with other plans of the employer to determine whether some or all of the employer's plans are top-heavy?

A. A collectively-bargained plan that includes a key employee of an employer must be included in the required aggregation group for that employer. See Question and Answer T–6 for rules concerning required aggregation. A collectively-bargained plan that does not include a key employee may be included in a permissive aggregation group. See Question and Answer T–7 for rules concerning permissive aggregation. However, the special rules in section 416 (b), (c), or (d) applicable to top-heavy plans do not apply with respect to any employee included in a unit of employees covered by an agreement which the Secretary of Labor finds to be a collective-bargaining agreement between employee representatives and one or more employers if there is evidence that retirement benefits were the subject of good faith bargaining between such employee representatives and such employer or employers. In determining whether there is a collective-bargaining agreement between employee representatives and one or more employers, the additional condition of section 7701(a)(46) must be satisfied after March 31, 1984.

T–4 Q. How is a terminated plan treated for purposes of the top-heavy rules?

A. A terminated plan is treated like any other plan for purposes of the top-heavy rules. For purposes of section 416, a terminated plan is one that has been formally terminated, has ceased crediting service for benefit accruals and vesting, and has been or is distributing all plan assets to participants or their beneficiaries as soon as administratively feasible. Such a plan must be aggregated with other plans of the employer if it was maintained within the last five years ending on the determination date for the plan year in question and would, but for the fact that it terminated, be part of a required aggregation group for such plan year. Distributions which have taken place within the five years ending on the determination date must be accounted for in accordance with section 416(g)(3). No additional vesting, benefit accruals or contributions must be provided for participants in a terminated plan.

T–5 Q. How are frozen plans treated for purposes of the top-heavy rules?

A. For purposes of section 416, a frozen plan is one in which benefit accruals have ceased but all assets have not been distributed to participants or their beneficiaries. Such plans are treated, for purposes of the top-heavy rules, as any non-frozen plan. That is, such plans must provide minimum contributions or benefit accruals, limit the amount of compensation which can be taken into account in providing benefits, and provide top-heavy vesting. A frozen defined contribution plan may not be required to provide additional contributions because of the rule in section 416(c)(2)(B).

T–6 Q. What is a required aggregation group?

A. For purposes of determining whether the plans of an employer are top-heavy for a particular plan year, the required aggregation group includes each plan of the employer in which a key employee participates in the plan year containing the determination date, or any of the four preceding plan years. In addition, each other plan of the employer which, during this period, enables any plan in which a key employee participates to meet the requirements of section 401(a)(4) or 410 is part of the required aggregation group. This concept may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). An employer maintains two plans. Key employees participate in one plan, but not in the other. If the plan containing key employees independently satisfies the coverage and non-discrimination rules of sections 410 and 401(a)(4), it may be tested independently to determine whether it is top-heavy. Also, the plan not covering key employees would not be part of a required aggregation group and would not need to be tested to determine whether it is top-heavy. However, if the plan containing key employees satisfies the coverage requirements of section 410(b) or the non-discrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) only when it is considered together with the other plan in accordance with §1.410(b)–1(d)(3), the plan not covering key employees would be part of the required aggregation group.

Example (2). A sole proprietor terminated a Keogh plan in 1981. In 1982, the sole proprietor incorporated and established a corporate plan with a calendar-year plan year. For purposes of determining whether the corporate plan is top-heavy for its 1984 plan year, the terminated Keogh plan and the corporate plan would be part of a required aggregation group. The sole proprietor and the corporation would be treated as a single employer under section 414(c). Under Question and Answer T–4, the terminated plan would be aggregated with the corporate plan because it was maintained within the five-year period ending on the determination date for the 1984 plan year and because, but for the fact that it terminated, it would be aggregated with the corporate plan because it covered a key employee.

T–7 Q. What is a permissive aggregation group?

A. A permissive aggregation group consists of plans of the employer that are required to be aggregated, plus one or more plans of the employer that are not part of a required aggregation group but that satisfy the requirements of sections 401(a)(4) and 410 when considered together with the required aggregation group. This concept may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). (a) An employer maintains two plans:

1. Plan A covers key employees and independently satisfies the requirements of sections 410 and 401(a)(4).

2. Plan B covers no key employees. It also independently satisfies the requirements of sections 410 and 401(a)(4).

(b) As indicated in Question and Answer T–6, Plan B is not required to be aggregated with Plan A. Further, if Plan B provided contributions or benefits that were not at least comparable to the contributions or benefits provided under Plan A, then Plan B could not be permissively aggregated with Plan A because the contributions and benefits would discriminate if the two plans were considered as a unit. However, if the benefits or contributions under Plan B were comparable to those under Plan A, the two plans would be permitted to be aggregated to determine whether or not the group consisting of both plans is top-heavy. If Plan A and Plan B are permitted to be aggregated, and if the permissive aggregation group is not top-heavy, then neither Plan A nor Plan B would be considered top-heavy.

Example (2). (a) Employer W maintains two plans.

1. Plan C covers salaried employees and independently satisfies the requirements of sections 410 and 401(a)(4).

2. Plan D covers employees who are included in a unit of employees covered by an agreement which the Secretary of Labor has found to be a collective-bargaining agreement between employee representatives and the employer and retirement benefits were bargained for between employee representatives and the employer.

(b) The fact that Plan D is a collectively-bargained plan does not necessarily mean that it may be permissively aggregated with Plan C. In order to be permissively aggregated with Plan C, Plan D must provide contributions or benefits with respect to service with Employer W that are at least comparable to the contributions or benefits provided under Plan C.

T–8 Q. May an employer permissively aggregate multiemployer plans, multiple employer plans and simplified employee pension plans to which the employer contributes with a plan covering key employees or a required aggregated group?

A. Yes. Multiemployer plans, multiple employer plans and simplified employee pensions to which an employer makes contributions may be permissively aggregated with a plan covering key employees or with a required aggregation group if the contributions or benefits provided under the multiemployer plan, multiple employer plan or simplified employee pension by the employer are comparable to the contributions or benefits provided under the plan covering key employees or the plans in the required aggregation group. In making this determination, only the employer's contribution to the simplified employee pension may be used.

T–9 Q. What plans will be treated as top-heavy if they are part of a required aggregation group that is top-heavy?

A. In the case of plans that are required to be aggregated, each plan in the required aggregation group will be top-heavy if the group is top-heavy. No plan in the required aggregation group will be top-heavy if the group is not top-heavy.

T–10 Q. If a required aggregation group is top-heavy, and one plan of the group satisfies the requirements of sections 416 (b), (c), and (d), may other plans in the group include provisions which do not satisfy sections 416 (b), (c) and (d)?

A. No. Each plan in a required aggregation group is top-heavy if the group is top-heavy. Thus, each plan must contain provisions satisfying the requirements of sections 416 (b) and (d). If all the plans are defined contribution plans, only one plan need satisfy the requirements of section 416(c)(2) with respect to any non-key employee who participates in more than one of the plans. If all the plans are defined benefit plans, only one plan need satisfy the requirements of section 416(c)(1) with respect to any non-key employee who participates in more than one of the plans. However, in the case of non-key employees who do not participate in more than one plan, each plan must separately provide the applicable minimum contribution or benefit with respect to each such employee. See Question and Answer M–12 in the case of employees who are covered under both a defined benefit and a defined contribution plan.

T–11 Q. What plans will be treated as top-heavy if a permissive aggregation group is top-heavy?

A. If a permissive aggregation group is top-heavy, only those plans that are part of the required aggregation group will be subject to the requirements of section 416 (b), (c) and (d). Plans that are not part of the required aggregation group will not be subject to these requirements. Thus, if an employer wishes to demonstrate that the plans maintained by the employer are not top-heavy, the employer need consider only the required aggregation group. If, after considering the required aggregation group, it is determined that the plans are not top-heavy, the requirements of section 416 (b), (c) and (d) will not apply to any of the plans. If, on the other hand, the plans required to be aggregated are top-heavy, the employer may wish to determine whether there are any plans that may be permissively aggregated to demonstrate that the plans are not top-heavy. Assuming that there are plans that are eligible for permissive aggregation, the employer may take these plans into consideration. If, after taking such plans into consideration, the net result is that the entire group is not top-heavy, the top-heavy requirements do not apply to any plan in the group.

T–12 Q. For purposes of determining whether a plan is top-heavy for a plan year, who is a key employee?

A. Under section 416(i)(1), a key employee is any employee (including any deceased employee) who at any time during the plan year containing the determination date for the plan year in question or the four preceding plan years (including plan years before 1984) is:

1. An officer of the employer having annual compensation from the employer for a plan year greater than 150 percent of the dollar limitation in effect under section 415(c)(1)(A) for the calendar year in which such plan year ends (see Questions and Answers T–13, T–14, and T–15),

2. One of the ten employees having annual compensation from the employer for a plan year greater than the

dollar limitation in effect under section 415(c)(1)(A) for the calendar year in which such plan year ends and owning (or considered as owning within the meaning of section 318) both more than a ½ percent interest and the largest interests in the employer (see Question and Answer T–19),

3. A 5-percent owner of the employer, or

4. A 1-percent owner of the employer having annual compensation from the employer for a plan year more than $150,000 (see Questions and Answers T–16 and T–21).

An individual may be considered a key employee in a plan year for more than one reason. For example, an individual may be both an officer and one of the ten largest owners. However, in testing whether a plan or group is top-heavy, an individual's accrued benefit is counted only once. The terms key employee, former key employee, and non-key employee include the beneficiaries of such individuals. This Question and Answer is illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). An employer maintains a calendar-year plan. An individual who was an employee of the employer and a 5-percent owner of the employer in 1986 was neither an employee nor an owner in 1987 or thereafter. Even though the individual is no longer an employee or owner of the employer, the individual would be treated as a key employee for purposes of determining whether the plan is top-heavy for each plan year through the 1991 plan year. However, for purposes of determining whether the plan is top-heavy for the 1992 plan year and for subsequent plan years, the individual would be treated as a former key employee.

Example (2). The facts are the same as in example (1), except that the individual died in early 1987 and his total benefit under the plan was distributed to his beneficiary in 1987. Such distribution would be treated as the accrued benefit of the individual for each year through the 1991 plan year. However, such individual would be treated as a former key employee for purposes of determining whether the plan is top-heavy for the 1992 plan year and for subsequent plan years. The conclusions are not affected by whether the beneficiary of the individual is a non-key employee or a key employee of the employer.

T–13 Q. For purposes of defining a key employee, who is an officer?

A. Whether an individual is an officer shall be determined upon the basis of all the facts, including, for example, the source of his authority, the term for which elected or appointed, and the nature and extent of his duties. Generally, the term officer means an administrative executive who is in regular and continued service. The term officer implies continuity of service and excludes those employed for a special and single transaction. An employee who merely has the title of an officer but not the authority of an officer is not considered an officer for purposes of the key employee test. Similarly, an employee who does not have the title of an officer but has the authority of an officer is an officer for purposes of the key employee test. In the case of one or more employers treated as a single employer under sections 414(b), (c), or (m), whether or not an individual is an officer shall be determined based upon his responsibilities with respect to the employer or employers for which he is directly employed, and not with respect to the controlled group of corporations, employers under common control or affiliated service group. A partner of a partnership will not be treated as an officer for purposes of the key employee test merely because he owns a capital or profits interest in the partnership, exercises his voting rights as a partner, and may, for limited purposes, be authorized and does in fact act as an agent of the partnership.

T–14 Q. For purposes of determining whether a plan is top-heavy for a plan year, how many officers must be taken into account?

A. There is no minimum number of officers that must be taken into account. Only individuals who are in fact officers within the meaning of Question and Answer T–13 must be considered. For example, a corporation with only one officer and two employees would have only one officer for purposes of section 416(i)(1)(A)(i). After aggregating all employees (including leased employees within the meaning of section 414(n)) of employers required to be aggregated under section 414(b), (c) or (m), there is a maximum limit to the number of officers that are to be taken into account as officers for the entire

group of employers that are so aggregated. The number of employees an employer (including all employers required to be aggregated under section 414(b), (c), or (m)) has for the plan year containing the determination date is the greatest number of employees it had during that plan year or any of the four preceding plan years. For purposes of this Question and Answer, employees include only those individuals who perform services for the employer during a plan year. If the number of employees (including part-time employees) of all the employers aggregated under section 414(b), (c) or (m) is less than 30 employees, no more than three individuals shall be treated as key employees for the plan year containing the determination date by reason of being officers. If the number of employees of all organizations aggregated under section 414(b), (c) or (m) is greater than 30 but less than 500, no more than 10% of the number of employees will be treated as key employees by reason of being officers. (If 10% of the number of employees is not an integer, the maximum number of individuals to be treated as key employees by reason of being officers shall be increased to the next integer). If the number of employees of employers aggregated under section 414 (b), (c) and (m) exceeds 500, no more than 50 employees are to be considered as key employees by reason of being officers. This limited number of officers is comprised of the individual officers, selected from the group of all individuals who were officers in the plan year containing the determination date or any one of the four preceding plan years, who had annual plan year compensation (in the officer year) in excess of 150 percent of the dollar limitation in effect under section 415(c)(1)(A) for the calendar year in which the plan year ends and who had the largest annual plan-year compensation in that five-year period. (The definition of compensation contained in Question and Answer T–21 is to be used for this purpose.) In determining the officers of an employer, an employee who is an officer shall be counted as an officer for key employee purposes without regard to whether the employee is a key employee for any other reason. However, in testing whether the plan(s) is top-heavy, an individual's present value of accrued benefits is counted only once.

Example. A company is testing to see if its plan is top-heavy for the 1985 plan year. In each year from 1980 through 1984 it has more than 500 employees. Assume that (1) because of rapid turnover among officers, the individuals who are officers each year are different from the individuals who are officers in any preceding year, and (2) the annual plan year compensation of each officer exceeds 150 percent of the dollar limitation in effect under section 415(c)(1)(A) for the calendar year in which the plan year ends. Under the limitations, only a total of 50 individuals would be considered to be key employees by virtue of being officers in testing for top-heaviness for the 1985 plan year. Further, the 50 individuals considered as key employees under this test would be determined by selecting the 50 out of 250 individuals (50 different officers each year) who had the highest annual plan-year compensation during the 1980–1984 period (while officers).

T–15 Q. For purposes of section 416, do organizations other than corporations have officers?

A. Yes. For purposes of the top-heavy rules, sole proprietorships, partnerships, associations, trusts, and labor organizations may have officers. This rule is effective for purposes of determining whether a plan is top-heavy for plan years which begin after February 28, 1985.

T–16 Q. Who is a 1-percent owner of the employer?

A. (a) If the employer is a corporation, a 1-percent owner is any employee who owns (or is considered as owning within the meaning of section 318) more than 1 percent of the value of the outstanding stock of the corporation or stock possessing more than 1 percent of the total combined voting power of all stock of the corporation. If the employer is not a corporation, a 1-percent owner is any employee who owns more than 1 percent of the capital or profits interest in the employer. The rules of subsections (b), (c), and (m) of section 414 do not apply for purposes of determining who is a 1-percent owner.

(b) For purposes of determining who is a 1-percent owner, 5-percent owner, or top-ten owner, value means fair market value taking into account all facts and circumstances.

T–17 Q. Who is a 5-percent owner of the employer?

A. If the employer is a corporation, a 5-percent owner is any employee who owns (or is considered as owning within the meaning of section 318) more than 5 percent of the value of the outstanding stock of the corporation or stock possessing more than 5 percent of the total combined voting power of all stock of the corporation. If the employer is not a corporation, a 5-percent owner is any employee who owns more than 5 percent of the capital or profits interest in the employer. The rules of subsections (b), (c), and (m) of section 414 do not apply for purposes of determining who is a 5-percent owner.

T–18 Q. How do the rules of section 318 apply for purposes of determining ownership in an entity other than a corporation?

A. For purposes of determining ownership is an entity other than a corporation, the rules of section 318 apply in a manner similar to the way in which they apply for purposes of determining ownership in a corporation. For non-corporate interests, capital or profits interest must be substituted for stock.

T–19 Q. Which employees will be considered one of the top ten owners?

A. (a) For purposes of determining whether a plan is top-heavy for a plan year, the top ten owners are the ten employees who (1) own (or are considered as owning within the meaning of section 318) during the plan year containing the determination date or any of the four preceding plan years both more than a ½ percent ownership interest in value and the largest percentage ownership interests in value of any of the employers required to be aggregated under section 414(b), (c), or (m), and (2) have during the plan year of ownership annual plan year compensation from the employer more than the limitation in effect under section 415(c)(1)(A) for the calendar year in which such plan year ends. The five years for which the test is made will be referred to as the ''testing period.'' An employee whose annual plan year compensation exceeds the section 415(c)(1)(A) limit in effect for the calendar year in which a plan year in the testing period ends who has an ownership interest greater than ½ percent in that plan year is considered to be one of the top ten owners unless at least ten other employees own a greater interest in the employer during any year of the testing period and have annual plan year compensation during such plan year of ownership greater than the section 415(c)(1)(A) limit in effect for the calendar year in which such plan year ends. Ownership each plan year is determined on the basis of percentage of ownership interest in total ownership value and not dollar amounts. Thus, an employee whose stock interest is valued at 15 percent of the total stock value of a corporation in year one that was worth $15,000 is ranked higher than an employee whose stock interest is valued at 5 percent of the total stock value of the same corporation in year three which is now worth $50,000.

(b) If an employee's ownership interest changes during a plan year, his ownership interest for the year is the largest interest owned at any time during the year. If two employees have the same ownership interest in the employer during the testing period, the employee having the largest annual compensation from the employer for the plan year during any part of which that ownership interest existed shall be treated as having a larger interest. Thus, if 25 employees each own 4 percent in value of the employer during the testing period, the 10 employees with the largest single plan year compensation during this period will be considered the top ten owners. For purposes of this Question and Answer, compensation has the meaning set forth in Question and Answer T–21. This Question and Answer is illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. Corporation K maintains a calendar year defined contribution plan. On January 1, 1986, Corporation K has five owners who owned the following value percentages of K stock: A=50%, B=20%, C=15%, D=10%, and E=5%. On June 30, 1987, the five owners of Corporation K sold all of their shares of stock. The new owners and their respective ownership percentages were: F=40%, G=30%, H=10%, I=10%, and J=10%. Assume that, for 1986, A, B, C, D, and E had annual compensation from Corporation K greater than the section 415(c)(1)(A) limit and that, for 1987, F, G, H, I, and J also had compensation from Corporation K greater than the section 415(c)(1)(A) limit. For purposes of determining whether the plan is top-heavy for

the 1991 plan year, the top ten owners will include A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J because no 10 individuals during the testing period, 1986–1990, had a greater ownership interest than these individuals.

Example 2. Assume the same facts in *Example 1*, except that on June 1, 1988, F, G, H, I, and J sold their interests to new owners, K, L, M, N, and O. K, L, M, N, and O owned, respectively, 30%, 30%, 30%, 5% and 5% of the value of the shares of X. Assume also that for 1988 K, L, M, N, and O earned more than the section 415(c)(1)(A) limitation. For purposes of determining whether the plan is top-heavy for the 1991 plan year, the top ten owners will include: A, B, F, K, G, L, M, and C because these eight individuals owned the highest value percentages of the Corporation K stock. Since D, H, I, and J owned equal 10% interests in value, the two employees of this group who had the largest annual plan year compensation during the plan years of their ownership will be the last 2 top ten owners.

T–20 Q. For purposes of determining whether an employee is a key employee under section 416(i)(1)(A), what aggregation rules apply?

A. In the case of ownership percentages, each employer that would otherwise be aggregated under section 414 (b), (c) and (m) is treated as a separate employer. (See section 416(i)(1)(C).) However, for purposes of determining whether an individual has compensation of $150,000, or whether an individual is a key employee by reason of being an officer or a top ten owner, compensation from each entity required to be aggregated under sections 414 (b), (c) and (m) is taken into account. These rules may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. An individual owns two percent of the value of a professional corporation, which in turn owns a 1/10th of 1 percent interest in a partnership. The entities must be aggregated in accordance with section 414(m). The individual performs services for the professional corporation and for the partnership. The individual receives compensation of $125,000 from the professional corporation and $26,000 from the partnership. The individual is considered to be a key employee with respect to the employer that comprises both the professional corporation and the partnership because he has a two percent interest in the professional corporation and because his combined compensation from both the professional corporation and the partnership is more than $150,000.

T–21 Q. For purposes of testing whether an individual has compensation of more than $150,000, what definition of compensation must be used?

A. The definition of compensation to be used is the definition in §1.415–2(d). In the case of an individual, including a self-employed individual, §1.415–2(d)(2)(i) excludes from compensation amounts contributed to a plan of deferred compensation. Alternatively, compensation that would be stated on an employee's Form W–2 for the calendar year that ends with or within the plan year may be used. A plan must use the same definition of compensation for all top-heavy purposes for which the definition in this Question and Answer must be used.

T–22 Q. In the case of an employer who maintains a single plan, when must the determination whether the plan is top-heavy be made?

A. Whether a plan is top-heavy for a particular plan year is determined as of the determination date for such plan year. The determination date with respect to a plan year is defined in section 416(g)(4)(C) as (1) the last day of the preceding plan year, or (2) in the case of the first plan year, the last day of such plan year. Distributions made and the present value of accrued benefits are generally determined as of the determination date. (See Questions and Answers T–24 and T–25 for more specific rules.)

T–23 Q. In the case of an aggregation group, when must the determination whether the group is top-heavy be made?

A. When two or more plans constitute an aggregation group in accordance with section 416(g)(2), the following procedures are used to determine whether the plans are top-heavy for a particular plan year. First, the present value of the accrued benefits (including distributions for key employees and all employees) is determined separately for each plan as of each plan's determination date. The plans are then aggregated by adding together the results for each plan as of the determination dates for such plans that fall within the same calendar year. The combined results will indicate whether or not the plans so aggregated are top-heavy. These rules may

be illustrated by the following example:

Example. An employer maintains Plan A and Plan B, each containing a key employee. Plan A's plan year commences July 1 and ends June 30. Plan B's plan year is the calendar year. For Plan A's plan year commencing July 1, 1984, the determination date is June 30, 1984. For Plan B's plan year in 1985, the determination date is December 31, 1984. These plans are required to be aggregated. For each of these plans as of their respective determination dates, the present value of the accrued benefits for key employees and all employees are separately determined. The two determination dates, June 30, 1984, and December 31, 1984, fall within the same calendar year. Accordingly, the present values of accrued benefits as of each of these determination dates are combined for purposes of determining whether the group is top-heavy. If, after combining the two present values, the total results show that the group is top-heavy, Plan A will be top-heavy for the plan year commencing July 1, 1984, and Plan B will be top-heavy for the 1985 calendar year.

T–24 Q. How is the present value of an accrued benefit determined in a defined contribution plan?

A. The present value of accrued benefits as of the determination date for any individual is the sum of (a) the account balance as of the most recent valuation date occurring within a 12-month period ending on the determination date, and (b) an adjustment for contributions due as of the determination date. In the case of a plan not subject to the minimum funding requirements of section 412, the adjustment in (b) is generally the amount of any contributions actually made after the valuation date but on or before the determination date. However, in the first plan year of the plan, the adjustment in (b) should also reflect the amount of any contributions made after the determination date that are allocated as of a date in that first plan year. In the case of a plan that is subject to the minimum funding requirements, the account balance in (a) should include contributions that would be allocated as of a date not later than the determination date, even though those amounts are not yet required to be contributed. Thus, the account balance will include contributions waived in prior years as reflected in the adjusted account balance and contributions not paid that resulted in a funding deficiency. The adjusted account balance is described in Rev. Rul. 78–223, 1978–1 C.B. 125. Also, the adjustment in (b) should reflect the amount of any contribution actually made (or due to be made) after the valuation date but before the expiration of the extended payment period in section 412(c)(10).

T–25. Q. How is the present value of an accrued benefit determined in a defined benefit plan?

A. The present value of an accrued benefit as of a determination date must be determined as of the most recent valuation date which is within a 12-month period ending on the determination date. In the first plan year of a plan, the accrued benefit for a current employee must be determined either (i) as if the individual terminated service as of the determination date or (ii) as if the individual terminated service as of the valuation date, but taking into account the estimated accrued benefit as of the determination date. For the second plan year of a plan, the accrued benefit taken into account for a current participant must not be less than the accrued benefit taken into account for the first plan year unless the difference is attributable to using an estimate of the accrued benefit as of the determination date for the first plan year and using the actual accrued benefit as of the determination date for the second plan year. For any other plan year, the accrued benefit for a current employee must be determined as if the individual terminated service as of such valuation date. For this purpose, the valuation date must be the same valuation date for computing plan costs for minimum funding, regardless of whether a valuation is performed that year.

T–26. Q. What actuarial assumptions are used for determining the present value of accrued benefits for defined benefit plans?

A. (a) There are no specific prescribed actuarial assumptions that must be used for determining the present value of accrued benefits. The assumptions used must be reasonable and need not relate to the actual plan and investment experience. The assumptions need not be the same as those used for